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NATIONAL IDEALS AND PREPAREDNESS

BY WILBUR C. ABBOTT,

Professor of History, Yale University.

An English writer has recently declared that Germany is the catfish in the cosmic tank, which has stirred up us codfish nations and prevented our becoming overfat with material prosperity, by giving us something else to do and to think about besides getting rich. And whether one is pro-German or "so neutral that he doesn't care who whips them," there is something in that statement well worth pondering. It requires no consideration to perceive that the tremendous controversy now raging in the United States, and in the world generally, whatever the military outcome of the war, is having an influence on the thought of mankind scarcely to be measured in comparison with any such movement in the past fifty years. It has not merely diverted our attention from our absorption in money-getting; it has not only showed us that business, which we have regarded for a generation as the chief end of man, is, after all, only one of the interests of the world and not always the most vital one. It has impressed upon us that moral no less than economic factors are still a part of human affairs, and the most important ones; that self-sacrifice, honor and courage, duty and discipline are still determining elements in human life, and still to be reckoned with in the equation. It has caused not merely an extraordinary revival of the religious factors in human experience, which has, indeed, had little reflex in this country; but it has revealed a powerful revival of that sentiment which we call patriotism, which has extended itself even to the United States. In the face of the doctrines of the so-called "wider liberty," "greater socialization," and "universal brotherhood," there has emerged a large body of individuals who have manifestly no desire to be transformed into citizens of the world, or even of a municipalized society. They are not anxious to find themselves men without a country or a home; even though they are assured that the nation and the family are outworn institutions doomed to extinction. And, in any consideration of the probable effect of a change in our national equipment and policy, that simple

and old-fashioned element must be taken into account, even though it has not been so vocal as the more advanced reformers in recent years.

It is true that some of my friends have declared themselves with more or less—generally less—restraint upon the other side. Moved by the horrors of war, as well as by a comfortable optimism which proceeds in many instances from a life which has had few hard places, they have declared, virtually, that nothing is worth fighting for. But no one who has really lived in a real world believes that. He knows that mere goodness, without strength or intelligence, not only makes him the prey of those with less conscience than himself, but leads to the destruction of the very ideal for which he stands. That peace hath her victories no less than war carries as its corollary that it has its conflicts as well. Nor is any one who has knowledge of affairs likely to believe that the business world has renounced self-seeking and the inevitable struggle which comes from competition. Least of all can any one, viewing the tremendous world conflict, taking into consideration the pleas of economic necessity put forward by one set of powers and the steps being taken by their opponents to inaugurate a trade war on the conclusion of the armed struggle, be under any illusions that there are more ways of putting men and nations out of action than by bullets and bayonets.

But it is as difficult in these days that try men's souls, to declare one's self in favor of reasonable precaution against aggression without being condemned as a militarist, as it is to urge a policy of keeping out of unnecessary trouble without being hailed as a pacifist. It has been said with much humor and more point that recent events seem to have demonstrated that "Thrice just is he who has his quarrel armed"; for our own position of benevolent but disarmed neutrality has brought the United States very nearly to impotence to a cause in which we, in common with all nations save one consider right—that of humanity in sea warfare.

And this is the second of the considerations which present themselves in such a problem as that we have before us, not merely the preservation of our property but of our principles by the increase of our land and naval force. It is not easy to see how the maintenance of an army and a navy adequate to attain these ends can be regarded as dangerous to international morality any more than the

employment of a proper police force—to which our pacifist friends doubtless contribute—is inimical to the social order of the communities in which they live.

For if history teaches one lesson more than another, it is that peace and war are not so much questions of so-called preparedness as of the spirit and aims of a people and its rulers, and this is a problem not of an army and a navy so much as of the human heart. The first king of Prussia prepared the army with which his son, Frederick the Great, wrested Silesia from Austria, but his own reign was an era of all but unbroken peace. Never has the United States been in a better position to enforce its authority and extend its power in the western hemisphere than at the close of Civil War; and never has its peacefulness been more in evidence. The fundamental thing is what nations are trained to think and believe—those matters of the spirit which we know as traditions and ideals.

Any increase of our forces by sea and land will, obviously, bring certain new elements into our national life and produce certain easily predicated results. It will increase taxation; it will open to a far wider portion of our people what is to them virtually a new profession, that of arms; it will, in some degree, turn men's thoughts away from the complacent self-satisfaction which our long isolation has engendered. What other results it may have, we can but conjecture; and it is an old maxim, "never prophesy unless you know." One of my more belligerent friends observed to me that he didn't know what would happen to the United States if it increased its army and navy, but he could guess pretty closely what would happen to us if we didn't. And in that observation lies one answer to the problem. It is that, if we desire the continuance of the peace which we have so long enjoyed, that peace in which alone rests the possibility of working out the solution of the tremendous problems of democracy in an industrialized society which press so strongly upon us, and which would be indefinitely postponed or infinitely aggravated by interference from outside, it is our duty to secure ourselves within reason against the unscrupulous statecraft which the last ten years has again introduced into world politics.

Nor is it merely a question of protecting our own shores. No individual and no nation lives or dies alone, its obligations are not wholly material nor are they confined within its own borders. Favored by its geographical location and the political developments of

the European powers during the first three quarters of the nineteenth century, the United States was enabled to develop a peculiar form of government and institutions in peace and comparative isolation without the necessity of maintaining a force to protect itself. Within a generation circumstances have completely changed. Thanks to the rise of a militaristic and imperialistic Germany, with ambitions for world-dominion, of a modernized Japan hungry for territorial expansion, to the fact that Europe has entered on the Pacific stage of her career, that eastern Asia has taken its place in world-politics, and that the United States now holds the old Spanish route to the Philippines, we are no longer on the edge but in the center of affairs. South America is now a first-rate factor in the world; with the same form of government and measurably the same ideals as our own. Thus, however we may deprecate or seek to deny our position and its responsibilities beyond our borders, we are compelled to look at affairs in a very different light than was vouchsafed even to our own fathers. Whether we believe that duty has determined destiny or that destiny has determined our duty, the fact of our present situation remains essentially the same.

Captain Mahan has acutely observed that this country, like England, is, for all military purposes, an island nation; since it is inconceivable that we should expect invasion from Mexico or Canada; and that our policy should be directed with this axiom in mind. It should be, in brief, a navy adequate to defend our coasts, an army large enough to support the sea forces, and a reserve sufficient to support them both. But beside these we should have, in so far as possible, an "open" diplomacy, and a people "educated," to use a popular phrase, to a point where the appeal of demagogue and gusts of popular passion cannot move their government from those principles of peace and humanity for which a democracy like ours stands, if it stands for anything. That such a program can make for the species of militarism which produces war for what a recent German publicist defending Hohenzollern aggression has described as "profit or necessity," no reasonable man can well believe.

That it will in any sense affect the framework of our governmental system as we have inherited it from its makers, it is no less difficult to imagine. But—and here is the point of the whole contention—will it not modify the ideals and ambitions of the society which underlies that framework; will it not make us as a people

truculent and belligerent, eager for wider dominion and power, more ready to engage in far-reaching adventure, imperialistic, centralized, aggressive? That question does not stand alone. By a natural, perhaps inevitable process of economic development we have acquired, at the same moment that we have been drawn into the maelstrom of world politics, a huge population, ignorant not only of our institutions, our traditions, and the fundamentals of our polity, but foreign to our civilization. That another generation may see these men or their children Americans must be the fervent hope of all who believe in the United States and what it stands for. But that it will be the country we have known and loved there is little reason to believe. That its ideals and practices will have changed, no one can well doubt. And they should change, else would come stagnation and ultimate death. They do change before our eyes, though we are blind to the deeper meaning and tendency of that change. But it is our duty, as we stand at the beginning of a road that leads we know not whither, to see that, whatever form the new republic shall take, that it shall maintain "those eternal qualities of high endeavor, on which, amid all changes of fashion, formula, direction, fortune, in all times and places, the world's best hopes depend." That we should have a hundred thousand or a million men in our armies is a question of absorbing practical importance; but beside the deeper issue as to what the people of the United States believe should be done with them, it sinks into insignificance. For what men live by, is, in the last result, what they believe. Justice, tranquillity, defence, welfare and liberty, these were the ideals of the framers of our constitution. If, through the undreamed-of adventures of the coming years, we are able to keep our children in that faith; if, still more, we can inculcate such principles into our more recently acquired elements, we may look upon the future with untroubled eyes. "For he that walks in these statutes, and keeps these judgments, deals truly, and is just, shall surely live."